

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 02465 032121 Z

67

ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

AF-10 ARA-11 EA-11 EUR-25 NEA-10 SCS-03 SCA-01 RSR-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8659

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FOR D/ PW, FRANK SIEVERTS

E. O. 11652: NA

TAGS: . MOPS, SGEN

SUBJ: MIA MOTHER RECEIVED AT UN WITH VIVA GROUP

1. SUMMARY. MRS. CATHERINE HELWIG, MOTHER OF AN MIA, WAS RECEIVED AT THE UN BY ROBERT MULLER, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE CHEF DE CABINET, ACTING FOR THE SYG. SHE AND A GROUP OF 12 RELATIVES OF OTHER MIAS SPOKE TO THE UN CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION. FOLLOWING THIS MEETING, MRS. HELWIG CALLED AT USUN AND WAS RECEIVED BY AMBASSADOR BENNETT. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER A BRIEF INTRODUCTION MULLER STATED THE CONCERN OF THE SYG FOR POWS AND SERVICEMEN MISSING IN ACTION IN SEASIA. HE CITED THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SYG TO INTERVENE IN THEIR BEHALF WHEN SUCH ACTION WOULD BE APPROPRIATE, BUT CITED THE FACT THAT ARTICLE 8 OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT PRESENTLY PROVIDES A BILATERAL MECHANISM FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF THE STATUS OF MIAS. HE FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE SYG DOES NOT HAVE THE POLITICAL POWER OF SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT AT HIS DISPOSAL, HE WOULD BE WILLING TO USE HIS GOOD OFFICES TO HELP ASCERTAIN

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PAGE 02 USUN N 02465 032121 Z

THE FATE OF THESE MEN IF THE PARTIES DIRECTLY CONCERNED EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO ASSUME SUCH A ROLE. ONE MEMBER OF THE GROUP WITH MRS. HELWIG RECALLED DAG HAMMERKJOLD'S INTERVENTION WITH CHOU EN LAI TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF 20 POWS AFTER THE KOREAN CONFLICT AND ANOTHER EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE SYG COULD USE HIS GOOD OFFICES NOT JUST IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES BUT WHENEVER POWS WERE BEING DETAINED CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL LAW.

3. IN A BRIEF PRESS CONFERENCE THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP SET FORTH THEIR CONCERN FOR THE MIAS AND RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS. THEY CONVEYED TO THE PRESS THEIR IMPRESSION THAT MULLER HAD PROMISED THAT THE SYG WOULD TAKE ACTION ON HIS RETURN TO NY RATHER THAN IN THE ASSURANCE OF MULLER THAT THE SYG WOULD TAKE ACTION WHEN IT APPEARED THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT.

4. AMBASSADOR BENNETT THEN RECEIVED THE GROUP AT USUN. ONE MEMBER OF THE GROUP MADE AN EMOTIONAL CHARGE THAT THE USG WAS GUILTY OF UNTRUTHFUL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FATE OF THE MIAS, AND HE SAID THAT THE USG SHOULD START LEVELING WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ON THIS SUBJECT. AMBASSADOR BENNETT SAID HE COULD NOT GO ALONG WITH AN IDEA OFFICIALS WERE BEING OTHER THAN HONEST ABOUT THE SITUATION BUT COULD UNDERSTAND HOW, GIVEN THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM AND THE DIFFICULTY OF SORTING OUT CONFLICTING RUMORS AND REPORTS, THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON OCCASION CONFLICTING STATEMENTS MADE BY USG SPOKESMEN. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR BENNETT BUT HE ADDED THERE WAS A NEED FOR BETTER COORDINATING AND A MORE UNIFIED STORY. HE ADDED THAT THE USG MUST NOT TAKE A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE AND SAY THAT IT HAS NO EVIDENCE OF LIVING MIAS, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THERE IS CONTRARY EVIDENCE BUT ALSO BECAUSE SUCH STATEMENTS PREPARE THE WAY FOR BOTH VIETNAMESE DENIAL OF THEIR EXISTENCE. THE GROUP CLAIMED TO HAVE BROUGHT TO DOD ATTENTION 83 DISCREPANCIES IN THE LIST OF MIAS ISSUED AND CITED IN PARTICULAR THE CASES OF DODGE AND HRDLIKA. AMBASSADOR BENNETT PROMISED TO INFORM THE USG OF THE MEETING AND WAS IN TURN REQUESTED BY THE GROUP TO CONVEY TO THEIR REP ANY USG RESPONSE.

5. THE GROUP IS VIVA (VOICES IN VITAL AMERICA), 635 MADISON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 USUN N 02465 032121 Z

AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10022. ITS PRINCIPAL SPOKESMAN WAS JOHN FRANCHI. BENNETT

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